

Job Embeddedness and Turnover Intentions: An Empirical Investigation of Construction IT Industries

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Abstract

Organizations that can successfully retain their human resources have an advantage over organizations that cannot. Regardless of individual industry, the turnover of employees makes it difficult to secure a work force and costs companies enormous expenses to recruit, hire and train new personnel. Research targeting various industries does not show consistent results because of the different characteristics of the industries and their work forces. In this study, the effects of job embeddedness and work satisfaction on turnover intentions are investigated targeting small and medium construction IT workers. To this end a field survey was performed and 177 survey questionnaires were collected. Research results show that three hypotheses are supported: the more sacrifice, the higher career satisfaction, and the higher job satisfaction the employees have, the less turnover intention they have. However, the other two hypotheses are rejected: the higher fit and the higher links the employees have, the less turnover intention they have. Academic and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: *Turnover Intentions, Job Embeddedness, Job Satisfaction, Career Satisfaction, Construction IT*

1. Introduction

With the world economic recession, each country is implementing pump-priming policies. In Korea, there are several policies that are being implemented; the development of the “Four River Restoration Project” is the one of the examples, which shows that a civil engineering project has a great ripple effect on the economy.

As the global economy becomes increasingly turbulent, organizations that can successfully retain their human resources have an advantage over organizations that cannot. Indeed, a number of studies have shown that turnover negatively effects performance [1]. Hatch and Dyer summarized such findings with the observation that “firms with high turnover significantly under-perform their rivals” [2]. As such, organizational leaders are interested in understanding why people choose to leave their jobs and insights that might help with employee retention [3]. Accordingly, researchers have spent considerable effort developing and testing models to explain why people quit.

To explain the phenomenon of employee turnover, the social sciences have offered both psychological (i.e., micro) and organizational and economic (i.e., macro) explanations. On the micro side, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have captured most of the research interest. On the macro side, economic research often looks at particular industries or localities to explain how market forces such as unemployment rates or job supply and demand

affect the frequency with which people leave their jobs [4]. Sociological research has also looked at how turnover affects and is affected by institutional changes within and across industries [5], as well as organizational variables such as size [6].

Regardless of individual industry, the turnover of employees, from the perspective of human resources management, makes it difficult to secure a work force and costs companies enormous expenses to recruit, hire and train new personnel. Also, higher turnover causes negative effects such as the impossibility of recouping expenses invested in the workers who have turned over and the increasing burden of raising salaries to hire more outstanding workers than competitors [7]. In this respect, research on turnover by the type of business has been carried out continuously. Research targeting various types of businesses does not show consistent results because of the different characteristics of the targeting industries and their work forces [8, 9]. Research about construction IT companies, which has not often been conducted, can show different results from precedent research. However, Information Technology has been affecting the construction IT businesses, as evidenced by the development of BIS(Building Information System), ITS (Intelligent Transport System), u-city, and so on.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Turnover Intentions

March and Simon's [10] seminal book, *Organizations*, marks the real beginning of the attempt to develop an overall theory explaining why people leave their jobs. According to March and Simon's theory, the two factors that determine whether an employee will leave his or her job are the perceived desirability of leaving the employing organization (conceptualized as job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and the perceived ease of leaving the organization (conceptualized as the quality of job alternatives). The research focusing on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, in particular, has been extensive. Mobley [11] identified the sequential and intermediary variables leading from job dissatisfaction to eventual quitting. In an exemplar of programmatic turnover research, Price and Mueller [12] added to this model by cataloging the antecedents of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, including pay, social integration, instrumental communication, formal communication, centralization, routinization, role overload, promotional opportunity, professionalism, general training, supervisor support, coworker support, and distributive justice [6, 12]. It is important to note that in Price and Mueller's model, as in virtually all other traditional models, various factors influence turnover through their impact on organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which in turn influence intent to leave, which then leads to voluntary turnover. The result of subsequent scholarship based on these ideas is both impressive and troublesome. It is impressive in that turnover theory and research have proceeded programmatically in such a way that researchers can be confident about a pair of assertions. First, less satisfied and less committed employees think about leaving, look for alternative jobs, are more likely to quit, and do each of these to a greater degree when they believe that desirable job alternatives exist. Second, many individual and macro-level variables are related to turnover through satisfaction and commitment. However, the turnover literature is also troublesome in that even the most inclusive models leave the vast majority of variance unexplained [12, 13, 14]. A number of authors have therefore suggested that scholars need to expand their conceptual lenses to better understand employee turnover [14, 15, 16, 17]. The framework we describe below, in which we outline the turnover contagion process, is such an expansionary attempt.

2.2. Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness reflects employees' decisions to participate broadly and directly, and it moves scholarly attention beyond dissatisfaction-induced leaving. More aptly, job embeddedness is a retention (or "antiwithdrawal") construct. Hulin [18] never directly measured a general withdrawal construct, instead inferring it from the occurrence of multiple work behaviors. If job embeddedness is indeed a broad-based retention (antiwithdrawal) construct and if it captures a sizable portion of the "decision to participate," both on- and off-the-job embeddedness should predict not only employee turnover, but also other withdrawal behaviors, such as decreasing organizational citizenship behavior, decreasing performance, and increasing absence. Further, the explained variance in these withdrawal behaviors should exceed that explained by job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In meta-analyses, Griffith and colleagues [13] showed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment significantly related to absences and that absences significantly predicted turnover. Because on-the-job embeddedness correlates to satisfaction, commitment, and turnover [19], it should predict subsequent absences as well.

However, the effect of on-the-job embeddedness on absences and turnover may be reduced to zero when researchers control for satisfaction and commitment. Further, the ideas of Hulin, March, Simon, Lee, and Mitchell about nonwork factors suggest that off-the-job embeddedness predicts absences and turnover, and it may do so even when satisfaction and commitment are controlled for. That is, leaving a job may have significant effects on an individual's off-the-job life, especially if he or she has to relocate to find new employment. More specifically, people who are embedded in their communities should want to keep their jobs. Mitchell and colleagues [16] reported, for example, that having (1) a working spouse, (2) children in a particular school, or (3) involvement in community activities was associated with less turnover. To the extent that absences endanger employment status, they should be lower for people who are embedded on- and off-the-job.

Fit is how compatible the employees feel with the company, organization or the local community he/she belongs to. Mitchell et al. [19] suggested that the more the individual feels fitted to the job, colleagues and the business culture, the lower turnover is.

Links means that each individual is linked to other people, teams, and organizations officially or unofficially. A lot of organizations put a lot of importance on these links. For example, accounting firms try to increase the degree of the attachment by using a system of mentors and role models. The links outside of work have a great influence on the employees. Some firms provide their employees with information on their support and activities to the local community. These strategies of the organizations are helpful to reinforce the employees' links between organizations and local community.

Sacrifice means the opportunity cost of turnover, which is the perceived cost of physical or psychological convenience sacrificed when leaving a current job. Recent research suggests that job attitude has relatively little influence on the stay or turnover of the employees. Other factors than job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job alternative are stand out to understand turnover [9].

According to the results of Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, and Erez [8], fit, in relation to turnover, has a negative relationship in both hospitals and grocery stores, and links have a meaningful but lower negative relationship in hospitals, but does not have a meaningful relationship in grocery stores. Sacrifice has a high negative relationship in both hospitals and grocery stores.

In Kim [20]'s research on the turnover decisions of the research workforce, job embeddedness (fit, sacrifice) contributes to reducing the turnover while job embeddedness (links) has no meaningful effect on the turnover.

2.3. Work Satisfaction

Career is the path which an individual walks on through his/her work, Career satisfaction is the overall emotional directivity about one's career [21]. Therefore, career is behavioral process people have been pursuing and choosing to achieve career satisfaction.

Locke [22] defined job satisfaction as pleasure caused when an individual carried out an important job. Smith [7], also looked upon job satisfaction as a balanced feeling of liking and disliking or an array of attitudes resulting from harmony between good feelings and bad feelings. Cranny, Smith, and Stone [24] defined it as an emotional response caused by the comparison of expected results with actual ones when performing a job. To sum up the various definitions about the job satisfaction, it is an emotional attitude about the job given about an individual's values and need satisfaction. Employees with higher job satisfaction feel stable and become loyal to the job.

The research on career satisfaction has been carried out centering around factors affecting career satisfaction. Blau [25] suggested that career satisfaction has a negative relationship to turnover. Aryee and Tan [26], Aryee, Chay, and Chew [27] also suggested career satisfaction has a negative relationship to career change intention.

Research on career satisfaction and turnover intention has been carried out targeting various organizations, and this research has shown that there is a relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. However, while this research shows that there is negative relationship between the two, there is a little difference in the degree. Newman [28] and Munchisky [29] showed that there is a negative relationship between them, which is trivial in its degree. However, Cotton & Tuttle [30] suggested that there was a meaningful relationship between most of the job related factors and turnover when the precedent studies were examined comprehensively through meta analysis methods.

2.4. Research Hypotheses

Based on Mitchell et al.[19] and Kim [20], the following hypotheses are set about the relationship between turnover and organization fit, links, and sacrifice, each which are the variables of job embeddedness.

Hypothesis I. The higher work internal job embeddedness the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

Hypothesis I-1. The higher work internal fit the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

Hypothesis I-2. The higher work internal links the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

Hypothesis I-3. The higher work internal sacrifice the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

According to Blau [25], Aryee and Tan [26], Aryee, Chay, and Chew [27] and Mobley [31], when an individual experiences job dissatisfaction, he/she considers turnover, or does deviant acts such as absence and passive job performance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are set.

Hypothesis II. The higher work satisfaction the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

Hypothesis II-1. The higher career satisfaction the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

Hypothesis II-2. The higher job satisfaction the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will appear.

3. Methods

3.1. Measures

Definition of Turnover Intentions. In this study, turnover is defined as the action of leaving an organization by his/her will. To measure this, the questions used in this survey are those which Mobley [31] & Becker [32] developed.

Job embeddedness is defined as the phenomenon where the inner /outer performance of the job and its result are affected by the composition of the overall network to which the individual belongs [33].

Definition of Job Embeddedness. Mitchell et. al. [19] defined fit, links, and sacrifice as follows. Fit to an organization was defined as the degree perceived in how compatible an employee feels to the job he/she is performing and the company he/she belongs to. Links to the organization was defined as how connected he/she is to other people, team or organizations. Sacrifice to the organization was defined as the perceived cost of physical or psychological convenience sacrificed when leaving a current job. All these definitions are adopted here.

Definition of Work Satisfaction. In this study, based on the definition of career satisfaction by Cheong [34], it is defined as a psychological attachment to his/her job, the hope that he/she have related to the job, and the satisfaction about individual values coming from the career role expected by the members of the organization and other fields and the results of involvement of individual knowledge and ability.

Regarding the individual values and need satisfaction used by Locke [22], they are defined as the emotional attitude about the given job. Employees with higher job satisfaction will feel stable and become loyal to their jobs.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Concept	Factors, Source	Operational Definition
job embeddedness	fit [34]	as the degree perceived as to how compatible the employees feel to the job he/she is performing and the company he/she belongs to
	links [34]	how connected he/she is to other people, teams or organizations
	sacrifice [34]	as the perceived cost of physical or psychological convenience sacrificed when leaving the current job
Work Satisfaction	career Satisfaction [22]	the satisfaction about individual value coming from the career role expected by the members of the organization and other fields
	job Satisfaction [9]	the emotional attitude about the job given about an individual value and needs satisfaction
turnover intention [20], [35]		the action of leaving the organization by in his/her will.

3.2. Sample

During the period of the 20 days of survey, of the 200 questionnaires that were distributed to the workers working in information technology department in construction companies, 177(collection rate 88.5%)were collected and analyzed. They were analyzed using SPSS 15.0E.

To figure out the characteristics of the demography of the sample, a frequency analysis was conducted. There were 90 respondents of in their 30's(50.9%), 100 college graduate respondents (56.6%), 71 respondents serving for 1~4 years(40.1%), and 141 respondents who had experience with other companies(79.7%).

Table 2. Sample Characteristics

Category		Frequency Dist.
gender	male	152 (85.9%)
	female	25 (14.1%)
age	less than 30	28 (15.8%)
	31 to 35	47 (26.6%)
	36 to 40	43 (24.3%)
	41 to 45	46 (26.0%)
	46 to 50	10 (5.6%)
	over 51	3 (1.7%)
	Other companies experience	yes
no		36 (20.3%)
education-level	high school graduated	15 (8.5%)
	college graduated	53 (29.3%)
	university graduated	100 (56.5%)
	finished Grad school	9 (5.1%)
years of work	less than 1 year	26 (14.7%)
	1 to 4 years	71 (40.1%)
	5 to 9 years	55 (31.1%)
	10 to 14 years	16 (9.0%)
	over 15 years	9 (5.1%)
subtotal		177 (100%)

4. Results

4.1. Validity and Reliability Test

To verify the validity, an empirical factorial analysis was conducted, and to extract the composition factors, a principle component analysis was used for measurement variables. For reliability analysis, Cronbach's α value was used.

Table 3. Validity & Reliability Test Results

Construct		Validity factor loading	Reliability Cronbach's α
Variable	Item		
fit	F1	.752	.854
	F2	.818	
	F3	.813	
	F4	.734	
	F5	.694	
links	L1	.765	.665
	L2	.604	
	L3	.760	
	L4	.626	
sacrifice	S1	.654	.855
	S2	.828	
	S4	.797	
	S5	.872	
career satisfaction	CS1	.645	.868
	CS2	.867	
	CS3	.819	
	CS4	.689	
	CS5	.695	
job satisfaction	JS1	.796	.884
	JS2	.796	
	JS3	.767	
	JS4	.744	
	JS5	.756	
	JS6	.691	
turnover intention	TI2	.830	.850
	TI3	.798	
	TI4	.804	
	TI5	.820	

4.2. Correlation Analysis

All the correlation coefficients were meaningful under 0.01 of significance level. In detail, the turnover intention had a high correlation of -.657 to sacrifice of job embeddedness and had a higher correlation to career satisfaction (-.620) than to job satisfaction (-.506). There was, in addition, a correlation of .676 between career satisfaction and job satisfaction.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis Results

Construct	Mean	SD	Inter-Construct Correlation					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1 fit	3.36	.75	1.00					
2 links	2.74	.77	.276 **	1.00				
3 sacrifice	2.94	.83	.464 **	.298 **	1.00			
4 career satisfaction	3.08	.66	.537 **	.472 **	.680 **	1.00		
5 job satisfaction	3.30	.67	.463 **	.465 **	.482 **	.676 **	1.00	
6 turnover intention	2.94	.80	-.283**	-.197**	-.657**	-.620**	-.506**	1.00

4.3. Test of Hypotheses

In the process of verifying the hypotheses, each effect was analyzed using a hierarchical regression analysis to evaluate the relative influence.

Next, the hierarchical regression model affecting turnover intention was considered. Evaluating the relative influence which can affect turnover intention, sacrifice ($\beta=-.452$) is the variable which had the greatest influence, career satisfaction ($\beta=-.326$) had the second greatest influence and the job satisfaction ($\beta=-.208$) had the third greatest influence on the turnover intention.

Based on the analysis above, hypothesis I suggest the following results. Firstly, the hypothesis that the higher work internal sacrifice the small and medium construction IT workers have, the lower turnover will show(hypothesis I-3) had a negative influence. Secondly, the organization related links of the small and medium construction IT workers had no meaningful influence on the turnover intention.

It is acceptable to adopt hypothesis II. It was concluded that the turnover intention, sacrifice and career satisfaction and job satisfaction play important roles.

Table 5. Results of Hierarchal Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	SE	β	t-value	SE	β	t-value
	.244	-	21.736	.242	-	21.736
fit	.070	.029	.446	.068	.158	2.486
links	.063	-.006	-.093	.063	.144	2.367
sacrifice	.063	-.669	-	.069	-.452	-6.233***
			10.135***			
career satisfaction				.108	-.326	-3.648***
job satisfaction				.088	-.208	-2.813***
	R ² =.432, Δ R ² =.422, F=43.914 p=.000			R ² =.531, Δ R ² =.517, F=38.703 p=.000, Durbin-Watson=1.767		

* p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

5. Discussion

There is a gradual rise in the importance of competent employees in the competitive society and in the fast changing environment. While companies put more efforts into recruiting and managing human resources, there is more turnover taking place. Therefore, strategic approaches to the concern and management of turnover are needed. Here, the new viewpoint about the turnover was suggested about job embeddedness and work satisfaction.

To sum up this research, the higher the work internal sacrifices of the small and medium construction IT workers is, the lower turnover is.

The hypothesis that the higher fit and links there are, the lower turnover will show was rejected, which is a difference from other precedent research. However, there was also a study which showed that the significance of the fit, and links was at the low level Mitchell et al. [19] and there have been several studies which have shown that links had no meaningful influence [9, 20, 35, 36].

The implication of this study is that there needs to be comparative studies with other types of businesses since this study is focused on the construction IT workers. Also, there needs to be more research on whether the variable of demography has an influence on turnover intention, embeddedness (fit, links, sacrifice) and work satisfaction(career satisfaction, job satisfaction).

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